* TU 80.5 Zp no. 8

The Supernatural Element of Christianity.

AN ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN RESEARCH

OF

HAMILTON COLLEGE.

Delivered on the Sabbath Evening before Commencement

1845.

BY JOHN C. LORD, D. D.
OF BUFFALO.

IBR

TU
80.5
Zp
Box 1
no. 7

CLINTON, N.Y.
.....
1845

THE LIBRARY
UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Richmond, Virginia

THE LIBRARY
UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Richmond, Virginia 23227

HAMILTON COLLEGE,
OCTOBER 21st, 1845.

REV. DR. LORD:

Respected Sir:—We, the undersigned, in behalf of the Society of Christian Research of Hamilton College, return our sincere thanks for the able and eloquent address with which you favored us on the occasion of our last Anniversary: And by the direction of the Society, whose interests, in common with those of religion, will, we trust, be thereby promoted, as well as in accordance with the unanimous desire expressed by the College community, we solicit a copy of the same for publication.

We are, Sir,

Yours in the bonds of Christian love,

WM. A. FOX,
W. H. SHERMAN,
C. BOYNTON,
Committee of Correspondence.

ADDRESS.

The consideration of the characteristics of the Christianity of our age, and an exhibition of some of the causes which hinder the progress of the gospel in the nineteenth century, are topics which appear to be in accordance with the design of the institution of the Society of Christian Research. The subject is also of general interest; and though the thorough discussion of so great a theme within the limits of a single address is impossible, yet a brief and imperfect examination may be profitable in directing your thoughts to a research more full and satisfactory than that which the speaker may be able to present this evening.

While the truths of the gospel are ever the same,— producing through the energy of the Eternal Spirit similar fruits in all periods,—yet the careful observer will not fail to discover that the philosophy of every age has affected Christianity, whose progress has ever been hindered, and whose influence impaired, by the various and changing speculations of science, "falsely so called." Such is the frailty of human nature, even when sanctified, that the opinions of the pious are constantly receiving a coloring from the prevalent philosophy—as in the vegetable world rare and valuable plants, without losing their identity, are affected by the qualities of other and inferior things which surround them. How soon

was the simplicity of the gospel marred by the Platonism of the first ages! how readily did a baffled and vanquished Paganism enter the sanctuary of God in a monastic garb, establishing a new order of Vestals, restoring demi-gods, and surrounding Christian altars with all the gorgeous pageantry of her art adorned temples! To this day, the architecture, the paintings, the images, the incense, the vestments of the Priesthood, the sacrifice of the Mass and the adoration of the Host, in the Romish Church — are witnesses of the influences of Paganism, which, baptised by christian names, is as visible in the seven-hilled city, as in the days of Augustus.

The superstitions of different ages and of various countries which have received the gospel have not unfrequently become so interwoven with Christianity — the true and the false have been so blended — that it has become almost impossible to separate them, or to discover the tree of truth, concealed by the parasitical plants which have utterly marred its beauty and prevented its growth. How has the faith once delivered to the saints been modified, perverted, and corrupted, by ever-changing philosophies! How obvious the fact that the circumstances of every age have affected the developement of truth; while the adaptation of every dispensation to its time is a striking manifestation of divine wisdom.

The Jewish church was a walled city, in which the host of God's elect kept watch and ward against the beleaguring armies of polytheism. It was the appointed task of the ancient church to preserve the citadel of truth against overwhelming numbers, who planted their ensigns and cast up their banks before it. She was not to act in the field, but remain within the walls of ordinances, rites, ceremonies and separations, with which God had secured her. Her warfare was defensive. She stood like a solitary beacon light amid

a wilderness of waters which roared around her buttresses, and seemed ever about to overwhelm the solitary light which cast its rays upon a darkness which like that of Egypt might be felt. The same church under the Christian dispensation, the time being now come, was commanded to abandon her fortifications and go forth and do battle in the open field, face to face, hand to hand, until the kingdoms of this world should become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. She was directed to abandon the shadows of good things for the realities themselves, the visible for spiritual; yet how soon did she hunger for the flesh-pots of Egypt, and return to the weak and beggarly elements from which she was just delivered; until men were ready to go to the death for the emblem, who had no knowledge of the thing signified, and for the forms, who had no conception of the inward life of faith. When christian Europe cast her mailed legions upon the Holy land, to rescue the sepulchre of Christ from profanation, there was scarcely an enormity in the catalogue of crime whice they did not commit, with the cross on their shoulders and the sacred city in sight.

It appears to have been a part of the design of God to subject Christianity to exposures which should threaten its existence. More than once, to human view, the Christian Church has appeared like the Jewish in the days of Elijah, utterly corrupted; and the remnant after the election of grace no more discoverable. Without attempting to fathom all the purposes of the Most High in regard to those declensions which have marked the history of the church, it is very evident from the numerous prophesies of the rise, progress, and final ruin of the Roman Hierarchy, that He had wise designs to accomplish in permitting the revelation of the Man of Sin; and that in the Reformation the same remarkable development of the truth, that the "kingdom of God is not in

word but in power," was manifested, as at the introduction of the Christian dispensation, when a few unlearned and poor men were commissioned to assault the gigantic systems of Polytheism, which overshadowed the world, and whose roots by the growth of centuries had penetrated and struck deep in every soil. And that the power might be seen to be of God and not of men, He raised up a similar instrumentality at the Reformation, and broke the sleep of centuries by the voice of an obscure monk — stirring the sluggish heart of Germany as the voice of God. For it has ever been an uniform tendency in all ages, more or less modified by circumstances, to exalt the means at the expense of the power, to attribute to the material what belongs to the supernatural, — against which the providential government of God is continually arrayed, and ever will be, until it shall be universally acknowledged that it is the "Spirit that quickeneth," those who are dead in trespasses and sins. As the Jewish Church for a long time was disposed to the idolatry of surrounding nations, so the Christian Church returned to the formalities and ceremonies of Judaism, and forsook the substance for the shadow. The ecclesiastical order and governmentof the church assumed an importance which belonged only to essential truth. The ministry were made sacred by virtue of their office, rather than by making full proof of their ministry by a life of piety ; and at length the priestly office of the Old dispensation was assumed, and the teaching office of the New abandoned ; the sacraments were regarded as the substance, instead of the symbol of the thing signified ; and the outward and visible was held to include the internal and spiritual.

May not an analogy be traced between the departures of both Jew and Christian from the common faith, which hold to the present time ? The Jew was captivated by the ex-

ternal pomp of Polytheism, and longed to worship images of the unseen graven from wood and stone — the Christian returned to the forms and sacrifices of Judaism, which had become a dead letter by the advent of Christ. The Jew sought the visible presence of the deity in the idol — the Catholic the real presence of Christ in the Mass ; the one desired to deify the similitudes of their own creation — the other, the wafer which was held to be the very flesh and blood of the Redeemer. The Jews were finally taught to abhor idolatry, by the repeated judgments of God and the seventy years captivity, but soon fell into the error of relying upon the outward and ceremonial in their own institutions, and went about to seek a righteousness of their own — the Christian at the Reformation learned to abominate the errors of Rome, but rapidly fell into the same kind of formalism as his Hebrew prototype, after his escape from idolatry. Thus amid the changes of dispensations, and the long lapse of centuries of time, the tendency of our depraved nature is perceived ever inclining to the things which are seen, ever captivated by externals, ever turning when driven from one, to some other form of materialism.

While the original apostacy is thus evidenced, and the common depravity of our nature, it should not be forgotten that there is in the constitution of man, whose soul looks out of a material organization upon the visible world and is dependent upon the senses for all impressions from without, a craving to symbolize that which is unseen and spiritual. All our ideas are conveyed in images borrowed from the objects of sense, and we think and reason in the use of the signs of ideas ; and when men had broken covenant with God it is no wonder they fell into polytheism — worshipping first the Host of Heaven — descending at length to the adoration of images — peopling every river, grove and fountain with local divini-

ties — adding at length to the catalogue of their demi-gods their warriors and kings; first deifying nature, and afterwards man — gratifying at once the natural desire for a material image of the invisible, and the pride which led our first parents to seek to become as gods. With this principle in view, we have the key of the various forms of idolatry in the world, and the grand cause of the errors and apostacies in the church; and we may find a similar tendency developing itself in our own times, and influencing the Christianity of the present age. The visible, formal and material have ever usurped the place of the spiritual and supernatural; and upon the common foundation of materialism all systems of error have been erected — and from this as a common fountain have ever flowed the heresies which have corrupted the church.

In the nineteenth century the grand hindrance to the gospel is to be found in the perversion, obscuration or open denial of the Supernatural Element of Christianity. The philosophy of Locke and his followers; and of Hobbes and Bentham, who have superadded the utilitarian scheme to the materialism of the former, are thought by their admirers to have disenchanted the universe of the spiritual and supernatural. There is no longer a "divinity which stirs within us," or without us. The innate and ideal are consigned to the tomb of the Capulets; and the mine and the cotton factory are the divinities of mountain and rivulet. Of the effect upon the fine arts, this is not the time or place to speak, it is enough to say that this philosophy is more grossly material than the polytheistic, which, though it could not elevate man religiously, at least preserved his reverence for the supernatural — his conceptions of the ideal — and gave to the world those miracles of art — or to use the words of one of our own poets:

"Those forms of beauty seen no more,
Yet once to art's rapt vision given.
Oh yet the enamored Sun delays,
And pries thro' fount and crumbling fane
To win to his adoring gaze
Those children of the sky again!"

While we have rejected the falsehoods and superstitions of Paganism, we seem to have forgotten the clear revelation in the scriptures of truth of the existence and delegated providence of angels over the destinies of men; rejecting the error of the heathen world, we have abandoned the fact of which their worship of demons was but the perversion. In removing the "wood, hay and stubble," we have sought to undermine the foundation upon which the superstructure of error rested, and abhorrent of demi-gods, we either neglect or deny the truth "that He maketh his angels winds, His messengers a flame of fire." The sentiment which Shakspeare puts in the mouth of Hamlet—

"There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio,
Than are dreampt of in your philosophy."

is more applicable to this, than to the age of Elizabeth; for to our philosophy nothing difficult or mysterious remains, all things are known, all mysteries are fathomed, the material universe is a vast engine of which the propelling power may yet be called God, for want of a better term, and because of ancient prejudices. A calculation of physical advantages, and how much can be made out of it, is the philosophy of the universe, and taste and imagination, the ideal and the beautiful, are sacrificed with the religious sentiment, upon the remorseless altars of materialism. Nor is the degradation of our mental philosophy less apparent. The soul itself has come to be measured and mapped, divided and subdivided, its powers and faculties identified with the protuberances of the brain, subjected to a physical law and an organic developement. The metaphysician has turned surveyor, and with the head

for his field, and his fingers for his instruments, he ascertains the powers and faculties of mind in general, and the characteristics of each individual. The modern philosophy has buried the diviner's rod, the arts of magic and the wonders of witchcraft, in a common grave ; but as has been well said, the somnambulist is put in the place of the Soothsayer.—The absurdity is nothing if it be not predicated of supernatural powers, and nothing is incredible if it can be assumed of man himself, and referred to a physical law. The magnetic slumber, is said by those who ridicule witchcraft, to give to man the ability of revealing the past, if not the future, of being where his body is not, of vision without the use of the eye, of discovering and removing diseases which baffle the skill of the physician, so that powers once predicated of fallen spirits sink into insignificance in view of these pretensions. What was once attributed to the agency of the powers of darkness is now assumed to belong to the natural, but recently discovered, attributes of man himself; and we are gravely told of laws and physical conditions developed by Animal Magnetism, which enable him to see things past, present and to come. The superstitions of past ages were but the excrescences of truth ; and of the extent of the agency of fallen spirits we are ignorant ; but when man clothes himself with powers evidently supernatural, and even arrogates the possession of divine attributes by a physical law, there is an end of sober argument—human arrogance can go no farther than to assert, nor human credulity than to believe in, such claims. The faith in witchcraft and demonology of barbarous nations is reputable compared with this monstrous conception of our times.

Our philosophy explains everything ; it knows nothing of the wonderful or supernatural ; it professes to penetrate the secrets of nature, and in its theological field to declare the

counsels of God. It answers in the affirmative the solemn questions proposed by Jehovah, "Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea, or hast thou walked in search of the depth? Have the gates of death been opened to thee, or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? Where is the way where light dwelleth, and as for darkness where is the place thereof? Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare if thou hast understanding." But none of these things trouble the materialist, who can answer equally well to the question proposed by the Holy Spirit, "knowest thou the ordinances of Heaven?" "can man by searching find out God?" The popular theology of the day is deeply infected with this philosophy. It proposes to solve the mystery which has been "hid for ages;" undertakes to explain the things in the scriptures "hard to be understood;" offers to our faith the positive demonstrations of science; and declares the moral as well as the material universe to be now delivered from the supernatural and mystical: while those who cannot run to the same excess of riot are thought to be behind the intelligence of the age, and yet in bondage to a bigoted spirit and an antiquated faith. Christianity is presented as a progressive system, capable of new developments, and able to keep pace with the extraordinary advance of the present age, and containing nothing contrary to its philosophy. To accomplish this, of course, the supernatural element of Christianity must be disposed of; and though to the German Neology and its interpretations of scripture the leap is too great to be taken at once, yet the indications of relationship are too plain to be mistaken.

But what is the tendency of this growing rationalism upon the practical Christianity of the age, and the influence and progress of the gospel at home and abroad? The decay of religious reverence may be mentioned as one result. Much

of the preaching of the day is divested of that solemnity in manner and matter which should characterize the message of one who stands between the living and the dead, as an Ambassador for Christ, to proclaim the powers of the world to come. The doctrines of the Bible are discussed philosophically rather than scripturally. With a text too often taken as a mere motto, the preacher seeks to prove his position analogically, or by divesting his doctrine of mystery, or by the fitness of things, and by frequent appeals to the prejudices rather than to the consciences of his hearers. It is sometimes deemed the highest evidence of ability in the preacher to successfully contradict his text in his sermon, and to show that its true meaning is absolutely opposed to its plain and obvious signification. It has not unfrequently been argued from the pulpit that a sound morality demands a particular interpretation of certain passages of scripture ; and certain ultra views in some of the reformations of the day have been based upon this principle, which saps the foundation of revealed religion, by bringing the Bible to the test of a pre-conceived opinion, and destroying its authority as the supreme standard of our faith and practice. Does not the language of some of the conventions assembled for the purpose of breaking the bonds of the Slave indicate their want of confidence in the gospel? It has been recently said by a distinguished advocate of the rights of man, in substance, that if the gospel tolerates the relation of master and slave, the gospel must be abandoned, and the Christian Church threatened that if they do not so interpret the word of God as to make it denounce the relation in the abstract, and make its immediate abandonment a term of communion, that Christianity must give place to a better system of morality. This is an extreme case, and an infidel opinion, but demonstrates the final result of exalting reason above the word of God. This want of reverence is also per-

ceivable in the prayers of many who come into the presence of the King of Kings with an evident lack of godly fear, who address themselves to the divine majesty as though they were conversing with an equal, and with a brazen confidence rather argue than ask, rather demand than pray. The building consecrated to the worship of God is frequently desecrated by harangues on every topic, from men of every character; and a want of reverence is often indicated in the deportment of those who are assembled in the sanctuary — they hear the messenger of God, if they condescend to listen at all, as they would a political orator, and treat his discussion as though it were a debate, and "consider not that they do evil," though a voice from the Holy Spirit is in their ears, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to pay the sacrifice of fools." An increasing irreverence manifested toward the Bible, the Ministry and the Ordinances, is abundantly indicative of the tendency to divest the doctrines of revelation of mystery — the ordinances, of sacredness — the ministry, of respect — and the word, of the life-giving power of the "Spirit that quickeneth."

A more conclusive evidence of the fact that the supernatural element of the gospel is practically overlooked, undervalued or denied, is to be found in the significant silence which is, for the most part, observed in relation to the doctrine of angels. That we are surrounded by an economy of spiritual being, which, though not the object of our senses, is yet exerting upon human affairs a direct and universal influence, is a clearly revealed truth. Our Lord expressly teaches that good angels are ministering spirits, that they are active, and interested in the fortunes of men, and rejoice in their holy habitations over one sinner that repenteth. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Fa-

ther which is in heaven," is the testimony of the God Man Mediator, who has told us also that the soul of Lazarus was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom; and Paul declares that the Apostles were made spectacles to angels and men. On the other hand we are connected with the fallen angels in the sacred scriptures, not only by our apostacy in Adam, but by the continued dominion of the God of this world over the children of disobedience. The adversary of souls as a roaring lion yet seeks whom he may destroy, and apostate angels are his servants and agents to draw men down to perdition. They are styled, in the New Testament, principalities and powers, whom Christ is said by the Apostle to have spoiled, in his triumph over death and hell. The warfare of the Christian is said to be with evil spirits in high places, and against him thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, are continually arrayed — the manner of whose influence is a profound mystery, as is the action of the Holy Spirit, and good angels, while the fact is perfectly intelligible, and the revelation of it too plain to be misunderstood.

But how much influence do these important and awful truths exert upon the church and the world at the present time? How many professing Christians have reference to them in their prayers, and watch against the wiles of evil spirits? How many ministers habitually present these truths as momentuous, and deeply concerning the question of salvation? How often is the solemn motive urged upon men that they are surrounded with a cloud of witnesses, and that opposing host of angels contend for the soul of man in this valley of decision? Not that these truths are obliterated from our confessions of faith, or directly denied by any evangelical denomination, but their power is gone — no practical interest is manifested in them, no considerable influence do they exert. How few venture in the face of the shallow materialism of

the day to urge upon the consciences of men the existence and influence of the spiritual economy? How many are bold enough to tell a generation wise in their own conceit, that a spiritual body is, to a true philosophy, no greater marvel than a natural body, and that the existence of superior intelligences, differently constituted from man, is taught by the extent of the universe; inasmuch as God, who obviously made our planet for human inspection, has doubtless created Powers and Principalities who are able to survey a universe and compass the vast distances which to us are "impassible solitudes of space?" Do Christians in general act as though they stood on high vantage ground on this subject, and were able to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men? Do they value as they ought the power of these truths in their own experience? Is not the faith once delivered to the saints accommodated to the Sadducean philosophy which denies both angel and spirit? No man can read the Bible without perceiving that the existence and influence of good and evil angels is plainly revealed; and what must be the result of the silence of the church upon the world — will they not despise and wonder, and perish?

The demi-gods of polytheism were derived from the tradition of the revelation of the doctrine of angels. The ancient pagans acknowledged that every man had both a good and evil genius, or angel, to whose suggestions he was continually exposed. How did the first Missionaries of the Cross meet the errors of paganism? Did they deny or conceal the true doctrine of angels? No: they proclaimed to the pagan world, "ye worship Devils, and not God; you have exalted fallen angels in your temples; you have listened to the suggestions and been led captive at the will of the spirits who kept not their first estate, and who are leading you down to the depths of Hell. They never denied that polytheism had

its spiritual agencies at work, though they demonstated that they were the agencies of evil angels—of Thrones and Dominions, who were cast out of Heaven.

May it not be true that in the propagation of the gospel in the dark places of the earth something of the power and directness of the primitive method of attack upon idolatry is wanting? Has not the leaven of our pernicious philosophy affected the great work of Foreign Missions, by weakening the supernatural element of the faith? The soul of man is so constituted that he has, by nature, a dim consciousness or instinct of the world of spirits. The most ignorant savages have a dread of unseen powers, and acknowledge an unseen world; their worst superstitions are but corruptions of revealed truths, of which some innate apprehension in the soul of man is every where manifest,—and in this are entitled to more respect than a philosophy which never had a ray of spiritual light, and is both earthly and sensual. Have we not failed to show the pagan world the connection between their errors and the original revelation of God to man, and too often confounded what is true and what is false in their systems in a common condemnation?

When the apostle Paul, upon Mars Hill, proclaimed to the idolatrous Athenians the doctrine of Jesus, and the resurrection of the dead, he selected an altar on which was this inscription, "To the Unknown God." "Him," said the apostle "whom ye ignorantly worship, I declare unto you." He quoted among the Heathen the acknowledgment of their own poets, and evidently sought to convince them that the gospel was a more full and perfect revelation of many truths held by them in ignorance and superstition. The symbol of salvation is universal in the sacrificial rite; and it is an interesting fact that the innocent victim which in the pagan sacrifice is offered for the guilty, the Paschal Lamb of the Jews, and

the broken body and blood shed signified in the Sacramental Symbols of the Christian, are signs remarkably similar, and declarative of the same truths. Was there no design in the divine wisdom in exhibiting the doctrine of redemption in the beginning to Adam, Abel and Noah, afterwards to Moses and the Hebrews, and in the last dispensation to the Apostles and primitive Church, by emblems, the exact agreement of which is obvious by a universal language, the signs of which should every where be found, and might be every where improved by the Heralds of the Cross. Should not the Christian Missionary say to the pagan worshipper, "Him whom ye ignorantly show forth in your sacrifice I declare unto you —I present you the key of your own system — the explanation of your own rites, which, perverted and utterly corrupted by your superstitions, are yet founded upon everlasting truths, of which I bring you the original revelation. I do not deny you worship realities; I acknowledge that they are Thrones and Powers before which you prostate yourself, but they are fallen principalities who have usurped in our apostate world the homage which belongs only to the true God."

Were the true scriptural doctrine of the agency of angels revived and presented as in the first centuries of Christianity might we not hope to encounter less opposition, and weaken the prejudices in the pagan mind that Christians believe neither in angel or spirit. There is a depth and power in these truths which would give to our Christianity both at home and abroad an element in which it is now greatly deficient, restore to its proper place a doctrine which is prominent on the pages of revelation, and give to the gospel its true character as an exponent of "the powers of the world to come." If the missionaries of Rome have corrupted the truth to win the Heathen to a new form of demon worship, shall Protestants

be driven into the opposite error, and abandon the just influence which a proper presentation of the doctrine of angels would not fail to give to those who proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ in the dark places of the earth.

But the supernatural element of Christianity is found eminently in the work of the Holy Ghost. It is the dispensation of the Spirit which gives power and efficacy to the outward and visible instrumentalities of the gospel. No doctrine is more insisted upon—no truth more frequently exhibited—in the revelation of Him who knows man, and the tendency of his depraved nature to materialism, than this,—that "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." We are constantly warned in the sacred scriptures against substituting the image for the reality, the shadow for the substance, the symbol for the thing signified, the letter for the Spirit. We are taught that it is the office of the Holy Ghost to reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Those who enter the kingdom of God are said to be born "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing, is the testimony of the Redeemer himself, who, in his last words to his disciples, recorded in the gospel of John, expressly ascribes the whole work of conversion, regeneration and sanctification to the Holy Spirit. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you; and when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Jno.

16, 7, and 14. But it is unnecessary to multiply passages to show that the entire work of man's recovery, from the first serious convictions which disturb his carnal security to the final and perfect sanctification of the believer, in the hour and article of death, is attributed solely to the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul declares to the Corinthian church, that his speech and his preaching were "not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power;" that their faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

This work of the Holy Spirit is supernatural, extraordinary, and efficient; the abiding and present evidence of the presence of God in the Church. It is to the Christian Church what the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, was to the Jewish,— the perpetual supernatural testimony of the gospel — the voice from the Excellent Glory — the Shekinah of the new dispensation,— which was to remain after the inferior work of miracles should disappear. It was declared by the apostle Paul that the gift of tongues should cease, that prophecy should fail, and knowledge should vanish away, but the greater office of the Holy Ghost was to remain,— the living energy and divine attestation and seal of the gospel.— The Church are directed to diligently use the means of God's appointment, with the distinct understanding that the power by which they are made effectual is not inherent, but superadded — not ordinary and uniform in its actings, but extraordinary, that the power might be seen to be of God, when the times of refreshing should come from His presence — not uncertain, but effectual — not natural, in the common connection of means and ends, causes and effects, or by ascertained laws, but supernatural, beyond our cognizance or apprehension as to the mode of the divine operation, which is likened to the creation of material things when the Spirit of

God moved upon the face of the waters, bringing order out of confusion and light out of darkness, "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." The work of the Holy Ghost is the divine supernatural attestation of Christianity, which, without it, is without a living energy, a present attestation, or a positive efficiency. The highestconceivable motives are indeed presented, and all necessary truth revealed, but there is no adaptation in the human heart to receive it, until prepared by the Spirit, until the good seed falls on good ground, for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Upon this fundamental doctrine of the gospel the influence of the philosophy of our age is manifest. The ingenuity of gifted minds has been taxed to the utmost to explain the work of the Holy Ghost, and destroy its character as a supernatural and efficient operation upon the soul. One has taught that the action of the divine Spirit is upon the truth rather than the heart—as though truth could receive a new attribute; another has contended that He works by an uniform law, in connection with means, and that the process of regeneration has at last come to be understood and explained; another proclaims that regeneration is not the direct work of the Holy Ghost, but of the individual renewed, who is simply brought by the Spirit's presentation of motives to a change of purpose.

The influence of these and similar views has been to exalt the means at the expense of the power; to give to men and measures, to eloquence, motives and truth, the glory which belongs to God, only. The faith of the church is made to stand in the wisdom of men rather than in the power of God; and though the doctrine is not abandoned, it has been rapidly losing its power. Do Christians when they enter the

sanctuary and listen to the word realize the presence of the Holy Ghost, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life?" Do they consider with reverence and godly fear the presence and action of a supernatural, omnipotent agent, able to turn the hearts of the children of men as the rivers of waters are turned, who can in answer to their prayers make the flesh of those who hear to creep with terrors of the world to come? Do they teach their children to wait with awe in the place — consecrated indeed, by no splendour of art, ornamented by no costly architecture, dazzling the eye by no idolatrous images of the invisible and spiritual, but made dreadful by the presence of the Eternal Spirit — none other than the house of God, the very gate of Heaven? Does the Believer realize as he ought that he *has* come "unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an INNUMERABLE COMPANY OF ANGELS, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect?" Is the unrenewed hearer made to feel the awful solemnity with which he should listen to the message of the gospel, where the Eternal Spirit is present to confirm the word, "if God peradventure will give him repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth." Have these considerations their proper weight and influence?

Our Puritan and Presbyterian fathers could listen to sermons of two hours length, and wish they were longer.— They did not weary in the service of the sanctuary, or make their posture in the house of God a matter of ease and luxury. They were indeed fed with marrow and fatness, and not with the husks of a vain philosophy; and they had faith and patience to digest the food which angels eat. Confidence, in the darkest hour, in the promise and presence of the Holy

Spirit, and their solemn deportment, their reverent attendance upon the word and ordinances, their unwavering orthodoxy, and their strict morality and non conformity to the world,— are strangely in contrast with the laxity in doctrine and morals which is increasingly characteristic of the present age.

While other causes have had their influence in producing this result, is not the grand difficulty to be seen in the philosophy which recognizes nothing as sacred, denies the powers of the invisible world, gives to man the attributes of angels, and makes the limits of knowledge synonimous with the boundaries of its own sensual vision? Having robbed nature of the presence of the divinity — having dethroned the lawgiver in the discovery and analysis of the principles of his government — having subjected the soul to material and mechanical laws, and promulgated a grosser materialism than the polytheist who imaged forth the unseen in visible forms and gave a voice and a deity to all things in nature,— this philosophy, as a final effort, seeks to deprive Christianity of its supernatural element, to subject it to ordinary laws; to account for its progress and power on natural principles, ascertained and common causes, and the skilful adjustment of means to ends; and, having taken the Holy Spirit out of the gospel, is content to give it the first place in the Ethical systems of the world, at least until a better is discovered.

On the other hand, an extravagant Transcendentalism seeks to graft a pseudo spiritual scheme upon the meagre faith of the Socinian churches in New England; and as a desperate defense, a last resort against the progress of materialism, is received by many in Orthodox connexion, who do not perceive in it the revival of the doctrines of Spinoza, in which God is in every thing, and every thing in God. The ultra Transcendentalist comes by another road to the same result as the materialist— the one leveling down, the other leveling

up — the one denying altogether the spiritual and supernatural, the other acknowledging nothing else — the one deifying human nature by rejecting all that is above it, the other by making every man a partaker of the divine reason and an incarnation of the divine nature. The one scheme is abhorrent of mystery, the other of all beside ; the first reduces all things to mathematical demonstration, and applies to all existences the compass and the square — the second rejoices in speculations profoundly unintelligible, and determines all material forms to be "such stuff as dreams are made of." Thus ever, the wisdom of this world rushes from one extreme to the other, regardless of the divine philosophy which teaches that the material and spiritual are equally real ; that "there is a natural body and a spiritual body ;" a life that now is, and a life to come ; things which are visible and material, things which are unseen and supernatural ; a natural life and a spiritual life, both the creation of the Father of Spirits, who hath given to the different economies in his creation, "a body as it hath pleased him ; and to every seed his own body."— The Transcendental philosophy, however, is not likely to captivate the Anglo-Saxon mind. It is Teutonic in its origin, and will flourish only in Germany, where infidelity is itself mystical. Yet in truth this shadow and semblance of a true spiritual system is more attractive than the utter barrenness of materialism.

But is there no other influence emanating from the prevailing philosophy? Is not its shadow cast upon the progress of the gospel in this age, weakening our efforts to evangelize the world and preach the gospel to every creature, in obedience to the last injunction of the Son of God? Is there not that nice calculation of means to ends, that exceeding carefulness which indicates an undue reliance upon the outward instrumentalities employed, and a feeble faith in the

supernatural work of the Spirit? Does not the financial and business like aspect of the work of modern Missions mark the influence of the philosophy of the day, and prove a decay of our confidence in the omnipotent energy of the Holy Ghost, by which "one is made to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight?" Is not the missionary of the Cross made to rely too much upon aid from home, and too little upon those to whom he is sent; and instructed to lay the foundations of his work in the Christian education of the children of the Heathen, without much confidence in the immediate conversion of adults? Is there not something of the apostolic zeal wanting which led the Church in the first ages to cast her missionaries upon the providence of God, counting Him faithful who had promised; and without carefulness for so many things? Is there not something defective in the system which builds a separating wall between the missionary family and the Heathen communities in which they reside? The expediency of sending out married missionaries has long been doubted by wise and pious men; and the example of Vanderkemp, one of the most successful laborers of modern times has not been without its influence. If our missionaries were encouraged to conform more to the habits and modes of living of the people to whom they are sent, to win their confidence; and incline them to a higher civilization, by first descending somewhat toward their level; if they were to become identified in part with the communities they are to evangelize, by marriage, and a conformity in things indifferent — their lives would probably be prolonged, by using the food and adopting the dress which are adapted to the climate, and their influence increased by having a common interest with those to whom they preach the gospel. A separation as marked as that which now exists is more likely to repel than attract; and a different system might exhibit more

practically to the pagan world the dependence of the Christian upon the Spirit and providence of God. It has been observed in regard to barbarous nations, that those foreigners have ever exerted a distinguished influence upon them, who have conformed to their habits and customs. The superior influence of the French with the aboriginees of this continent has always been attributed to this cause. There is reason to believe that in the first centuries the missionaries of the cross uniformly became identified with the people to whom they were sent, by the adoption of their lawful customs, if not by a connexion in the social relations ; and it is abundantly evident that less reliance was placed upon a permanent provision for their support than upon the providence of God, and the power and promise of the Holy Ghost, who, they were assured would take out of the most barbarous tribes a people to his praise. Something of the confidence, enthusiasm and energy which were evident in the primitive church is wanting in our day — may it not be traced to the causes we have considered, and particularly to a greatly diminished faith in the supernatural element of the gospel.

The fault, if fault there be, is in the constitution of our missionary organizations, and their mode of operation; and is not in the Missionary himself, but in the system under which he is instructed to act. There are no men more entitled to the respect and confidence of the Christian world than those who have devoted themselves to the work of the gospel in Heathen lands. There are no examples of heroism in modern times so worthy of the admiration and applause of mankind. Of all others, they are the least obnoxious to the charge of being tainted with the vain philosophy of the times. They have abandoned the pleasant places of their birth; they have become voluntary exiles, for Christ's sake, from the graves of their fathers, the pleasant memories of their

youth, and the cherished associations of home and country. No people have been found so barbarous, no climate so deadly, no obstacles so great, as to prevent devoted men and women, in our age, from declaring — in the depths of forests, on the burning sands of Africa, and in the crowded cities of the semi-civilized East, where "the pestilence walketh in darkness, and destruction wasteth at noon-day,"— the unsearchable riches of Christ. They have followed for the love of God and souls, wherever the trafficer has gone for gold; they have entered the habitations of cruelty, with their lives in their hands; they have denied themselves all that in a worldly sense makes life desirable; they have renounced all expectation of returning to their native land, to reap the reward of their labors; looking only to lie down in the grave when their work is done with those to whom they have proclaimed glad tidings; hoping to rise in the resurrection of the just, with many seals of their ministry, and say in the presence of the Judge of quick and dead, "here Lord am I, and the children thou hast given me." Who are the true exponents of a primitive Christianity, if they are not? I have honored these devoted men and women in my inmost heart.— Among them I count some of the dearest friends I have ever known, and my tongue should cleave to the roof of my mouth ere I would utter aught to weaken the high regard to which they are entitled, or give them a lower place than the vanguard of the host of God's elect. But if the system under which they act is defective, if they are hindered in their work by the unbelief of the Church, and by a system which they have no power to control, it is due to them, no less than to the cause, that those errors should be pointed out, and their embarrassments removed. Even if the speaker is mistaken, truth can lose nothing by discussion; and the system at present adopted by all our missionary organizations will

only be more firmly established, if the objections urged are shown to be without foundation. One thing is clear: modern Missions are not so successful, in proportion to the amount expended and the numbers engaged, as were the early efforts of the Christian Church. If we except the Sandwich Islands, where God has evidenced his sovereignty and the omnipotent energy of his Spirit, by causing a people sunk in the deepest ignorance and superstition, and whose moral and physical condition was, of all others, the most hopeless, to be born in a day—it must be acknowledged that the gospel has not had the progress, nor our Missions the success, which might have been expected. Not but what the fruits have been fully equal to the means employed, upon any ordinary calculation of means and ends, causes and effects; and may we not conclude that God is thus rebuking our vain philosophy and unbelief in the promise and power of the Holy Ghost, by giving us results in accordance with our faith; while he has in a single instance vindicated his sovereignty, and rebuked our unbelief, by His extraordinary work in the Islands of the Sea.

The time, however, is exhausted, and perhaps your patience also—though the theme is exhaustless—and I have done no more within the limits of this address than to suggest some things which may lead you to a further and more thorough consideration of the subject.

A more interesting audience could not have been selected. The young men in our Colleges and Seminaries of learning are to give character to the coming age. The educated class in this country exert an influence upon society which is neither fully understood or acknowledged, owing to our excessive republicanism; for our excellent institutions are ever exposed to that disposition to extremes which has always characterized our fallen humanity, and which is illustrated as well in our political affairs as in our philosophy.

"Knowledge is power," says Lord Bacon, though he has not said that it is either wisdom or virtue. The educated men of our country constitute a real aristocracy, for good or evil, beyond the reach of legislation, or the leveling spirit of the age. The Halls of Science, under our free institutions, are open to all; and none are more likely to climb

"The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar."

than those who have fought their way up amid the embarrassments of poverty, and been taught by her severe discipline the important lesson of self-reliance. Wealth and patronage have ever proved obstacles rather than advantages in the paths of glory and honor. Especially to the young men in our Colleges whose hearts God has opened to receive the truth as it is in Jesus, and who are to become the Heralds of the Cross at home and in far distant missionary fields, or to occupy places of government and influence in the Church, is committed, under God, the religious character of the coming age.

Did time permit, I might point out the numerous and weighty reasons which should lead those of you who have made a good profession before many witnesses, and have consecrated your bodies and spirits a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, before angels and men, and have not yet decided upon your course — to consider whether you are not called by the providence and word of God to the sacred office of the ministry; whether you can in any way more glorify the Father of your Spirits, or subserve the cause of the Redeemer's Kingdom, than by preaching, after suitable preparation, the truths of the everlasting gospel, either at home or abroad.

If anything I have said shall have the effect of deepening your convictions of the importance and influence of the Su-

pernatural Element of Christianity; and that our holy faith stands in the demonstration of the Spirit and the power of God, not in the wisdom of men; if you are encouraged to resist the false philosophy which seeks to bound the field of knowledge to the seen and temporal — the design of this address will be accomplished.

You are to be actors upon a conspicuous stage, before a cloud of witnesses, in an era of great events. You have fallen upon the latter days, when the signs of the coming of the Son of Man, to receive his Millenial Kingdom, begin to appear; when the ancient superstitions are waxing old, and ready to perish; when Anti-Christ is reviving his energies for the last great struggle in the valley of final decision; when the messenger having the everlasting gospel is seen flying through mid heaven; and the angel which John the beloved saw standing in the sun, is preparing, in view of the approaching conflict, to proclaim with a loud voice to all the fowls which fly in the midst of heaven "come and gather yourselves together to the supper of the great God." It may be appointed to some of you to behold the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, whose beams shall illumine the nations, and chase away the darkness of our sin ruined world. It may be given to some of you to hear the voice of that great multitude, seen in vision by the last of the Apostles, who shall proclaim the final triumph of the Son of God, and with the voice of many waters, and the voice of mighty thunderings, shall shout "Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." To you, in view of these things, and of these responsibilities, may be addressed, with great propriety, that ancient exhortation, "Be strong — quit yourselves like men."